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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000095

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DEPT FOR SCA/FO DAS CAMP, SCA/A
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR JWOOD
OSD FOR SHIVERS
CENTCOM FOR CG CSTC-A, CG CJTF-82 POLAD, JICCENT

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2017
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PREF](#) [IR](#) [AF](#)
SUBJECT: IRAN THREATENS UNREGISTERED AFGHANS WITH
INCARCERATION

REF: 07 KABUL 4006

Classified By: Acting DCM Bruce Rogers for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) On January 2, Iran launched the latest salvo in its scare campaign against unregistered Afghans in Iran by warning that these illegal migrants would be arrested and put into prison camps for up to five years. Iran issued this threat after Afghans ignored the recently-announced "No-Go Areas" policy designed to force them out of designated provinces, including Iran's violence-prone Sistaan-Baluchestan Province (Ref A). Afghan officials say they received no official notice of the planned detentions, which they claim violates the Iran/Afghanistan/United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Tripartite Agreement signed in November. An Afghan delegation will travel to Tehran soon to discuss the issue of undocumented Afghans in Iran.

Prison Camps For Illegal Immigrants

¶2. (C) Iran currently has both refugee and transit camps, using the latter to process deportations. Iran has asked for UNHCR assistance in reopening old refugee camps, but UNHCR opposes any camp solution and wants to avoid even the appearance of tacit consent. In fact, Iran probably has neither the will nor the budget to support holding large numbers of Afghans in camps for long periods.

¶3. (C) Rather than put people in camps, Iran is more likely to continue its deportation policy. The mass deportations in spring 2007 resulted in intense international criticism but deportations continued throughout the year, with the rate slowing in recent months. The year-end deportation total is 363,000, with another estimated 200,000-300,000 returning voluntarily. UNHCR's very rough estimate is that 500,000 to 700,000 undocumented Afghans remain in Iran. The flow from Afghanistan to Iran continues but has also slowed due to transaction costs now required to enter Iran legally (passport, work visa, transport) or illegally (increased smugglers' fees).

Setting Up Refugees For Failure

¶4. (C) More worrisome is Iran's actions to force legitimate refugees into undocumented status by setting new requirements that raise the bar for registration. Many refugees currently hold expired Amayesh II refugee registration cards that were not administratively extended as Iranian officials promised they would be. The online Amayesh III registration process begun on January 5 is also linked to an expensive and complicated work visa and residency permit application. Failure to obtain these documents will turn a refugee into an illegal alien subject to immediate deportation or incarceration. January 7 radio reports quote Afghans in Iran as saying the registration process was very difficult. Afghans living in No Go Areas cannot participate in the registration process. Rather than blatantly violate the international humanitarian principle of "nonrefoulement," Iran appears to be backing into it through administrative sleight-of-hand.

Iran's Motives: Water, Security, and Irritating the U.S.

¶5. (C) Kabul Political Counselor queried MFA contacts on January 6 as to the possible triggers for Iran's recent incarceration threats. Senior Policy Advisor Davood Moradian asserted the Iranians have three priorities at the moment: "water" (pressuring the Afghans to give up on projects that could reduce water flow across the border to Iran); getting the Afghans to sign the security cooperation agreement the Afghans declined to sign during Ahmadinejad's last visit to Kabul; and reminding Afghanistan that it can be made to pay a price for being too close to the United States. Moradian used the conversation to reiterate concerns about Iran's

KABUL 00000095 002 OF 002

increased meddling in Afghan domestic politics. Whatever the motives, Iran has succeeded in increasing the sense of instability and insecurity for Afghans in Iran, many of whom are long-term residents. Rather than leave, most are expected to cling to their lives across the border until deported by force.

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